



## Skin and Nail Changes

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*Skin and nail cells grow and divide rapidly. Skin and nail changes can occur when chemotherapy drugs break down rapidly dividing cells.*

### **Skin changes to watch for:**

- Drying or peeling skin
- Acne
- Rashes
- Sensitivity to sunlight
- Skin color changes (darkening of skin over veins or redness)

### **Skin hygiene precautions:**

- Gently cleanse skin with tepid water. Use only mild, non-perfumed, nondeodorant soap (Dove, Basis, Aveeno). Pat dry.
- Use moisturizing lotion or cream only after consulting with your nurse or doctor.
- Avoid skin care products with an alcohol or perfume base.
- Avoid injury to the skin. This includes extremes of hot and cold temperatures, rubbing, and scratching.
- Avoid direct sunlight. Wear protective clothing (hats, long sleeves, pants, and sunglasses) and use a sunscreen with an SPF rating of 15 or more when outdoors.
- Wear light, cotton clothing whenever possible.

**Nail changes to watch for:**

- Darkening of the nails, especially persons with a dark pigment to their skin.
- Thinning and ridging of the nail plate.
- Brittle or slow-growing nails.
- Partial separation of the nail plates.

**Nail hygiene precautions:**

- Wear gloves to protect nails during gardening and heavy cleaning.
- Keep fingernails and toenails clean.
- Keep fingernails and toenails short and cut straight across.

**Call your nurse or doctor immediately if you have**

- Any skin changes that occur in radiation therapy treatment areas
- Any new or unexpected rashes, skin or nail changes



This information is prepared specifically for patients participating in clinical research at the Warren Grant Magnuson Clinical Center at the National Institutes of Health and is not necessarily applicable to individuals who are patients elsewhere. If you have questions about the information presented here, talk to a member of your healthcare team.

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